

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

...TO...

Abraham Lincoln

1809



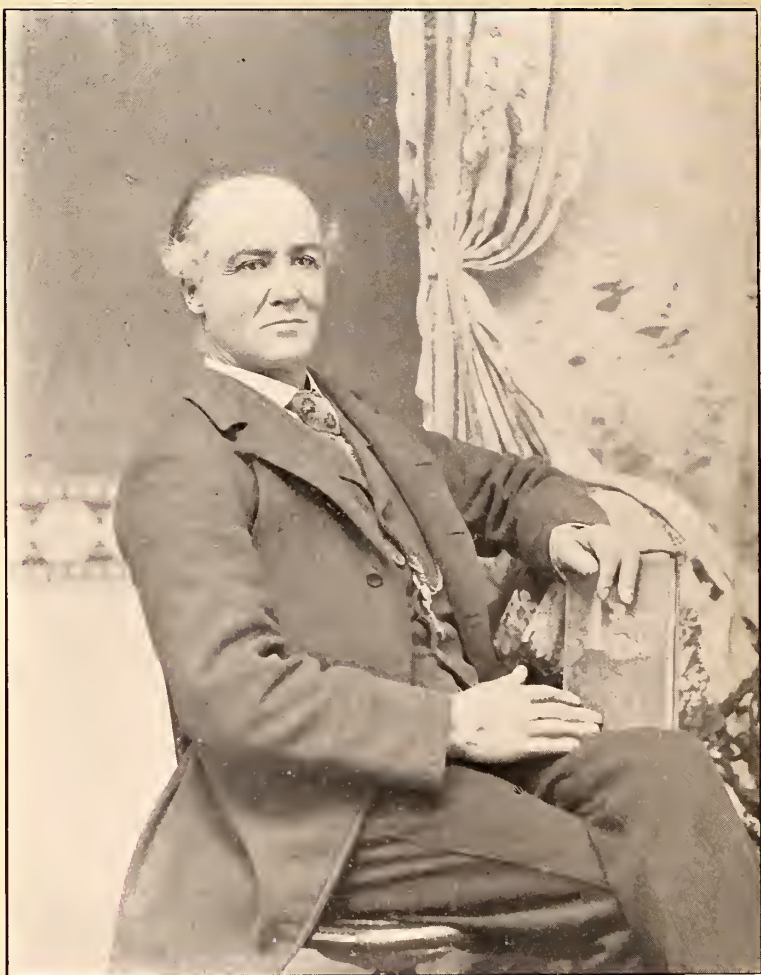
1909

By H. H. MEAD



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H H Mead,
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—TO—

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

—BY—

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THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

This occasion demands a passing tribute to our illustrious Lincoln—the perpetuator of our freedom, liberty and intelligence—a title which he more than any other, living or dead, deserves.

Since I came to the years of manhood and learned to think for myself, I have been amazed at the general prevailing opinion among intelligent, thinking people that Lincoln was a good rather than a great man.

The popular idea that he was a wise, intelligent, prudent general and an incorruptible patriot is by no means insignificant, but even this acknowledgment falls far short of the fullness of the merit that belong to the man.

It is well that the moral sense of the people compels them to bow in submission to virtue and goodness; to award an unprecedented fame to the chief who prayed to the God of Heaven while he fought the battles of his own country in order to loose the bonds of human chattle slavery; who resisted the charms of power when a nation bowed before him in admiration of his achievements. But presiding over the moral excellence of the man, the patriotism

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

of the soldier, the integrity of the one who was well versed in American law, diplomacy, statesmanship and government, there was an intellect vast, varied and prophetic!

His opinions were judicious, distinguished by their scope, strength and forecast; his letters were weighty and powerful; his speeches, a treasure of wisdom—a political chart—a nation's panacea against evil doers. A reading of them by the morning sun and at the evening's holy hour has been a check to crime. They give a new inspiration and impetus to education and to all of our business relations, because they establish popular government and freedom of thought of the people and for the people; they are a guide to duty and to purity of character, amid the dangers of national party strife.

Lincoln's policy comes to us—his descendants—with great wisdom, and should be well considered in the light of wise, judicious and just principles.

His declaration on the witness stand, though original in expression, was merely the creed of his life, every detail of which he adhered to during his entire political career: "So long as God gives me a heart to feel, a brain to think or a hand to execute my will, I devote it against that power which has attempted to use the machinery of the courts to destroy the rights and character of American citizens."

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

When once our American statesmen and law making power and diplomats imbibe the spirit of Abraham Lincoln, sectarianism, sectionalism, anarchism, and monopoly will hide their heads in shame.

The time is coming when Lincoln's orations and speeches will be regarded as the offspring of a mind enlightened by the knowledge of many centuries succeeding his advent. He loved us well and taught us wisely. Enthroned in the admiration of this world, without a peer, ancient or modern, with no title of men, he stands forth alone and impregnable—"Honest Abe, the rail splitter.") To add to or detract from would appreciably weaken or desecrate the dignity and strength which this plain, unassuming name implies. Men of unimpeachable character and force of will such as Lincoln possessed need no title to insure their immortality, nor do they contest for such prerogative rights. It is the small soul that depends upon so artificial a crutch.

Regardless of jealousies and the strife among the statesmen of coming ages, the monument of Lincoln will continue to stand alone in the firmament of the Nation's glory. His noble name and glorious deeds are engraven upon the hearts of every nation, the indestructibility of which future generations will prove.

Abraham Lincoln was so filled with the true

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

spirit of freedom, liberty and good principles that he imparted it to all with whom he came in contact. No man could more consistently say—"I believe in the universal brotherhood and freedom and intelligence of all mankind." No other voice has been raised for this American nation so complete in its mastery of the constitutional thought, liberty and equality before the law as Lincoln.

As a reliable chronicle his life is interesting, useful and profitable and will be read by millions both in America and in other countries. Furthermore, it furnishes material from which a reflective, well-to-do people may form an estimate of our illustrious statesman's ultimate worth and place among the great powers and nations of this world. To be born an American citizen is a pledge of comparative safety toward which no other man has contributed more than our noble hero.

Before some veteran's mental eye Lincoln is projected from the dim past, as he appeared in the neighboring city of his native state: A little and ardent youth, full of ambition, promise and hope. Some may see him in the earlier and some in the later stages of his career. To the former he will stand out on the background of the past as a tall, slender, impassive personality with flashing eye, his presence indicating at a glance his honesty of pur-

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

pose and ability to convince by reason and well founded argument. Never did this great statesman stoop to trickery or device to work upon the emotions and sympathies of minds weaker than his own. In later life he represented the strong staff to the bewildered and struggling states; the beautiful rod of genius and patriotic love and hope, the warm blood of youth still remaining to give animation, grace and exhaustless vigor to the wisdom, experience and gravity of age.

To others he appears as he sat in the chamber of the White House,—cheerful, majestic, gentle—his mind clear, his heart warm, his hope fixed on the peace of the nation for the last great change.

Lincoln always appeared as the penitent, humble and peaceful Christian statesman. This whole nation now receives him with filial affection and joins with him in solemn compact, and pledges itself to defend always the Liberty and Freedom for which he gave his life. Nothing greater could he give.

When the last spark of life fluttered and departed from the body of this great man, the nation as a whole mourned, and yet it realized to a man that the individuality and character of this powerful mind was immortal; that they could bury the tangible destructible entity; the hearts of millions that mourned for him; the mountains, rivers, lakes and the spread-

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

ing landscape from the Atlantic to the Pacific with which his name is inseparably associated—and then the real Lincoln could not be buried. He speaks for all future time and to all generations, as he spoke before his earthly career was cut short.

A great mind, a great heart, a great orator, a great career—in short, a great man—has been consigned to history. She will read his rare gifts of deep insight, keen discrimination, clear direct and commanding logic, upon which she will always love to dwell. Truly his was a great, magnanimous gentle and loving heart. She will linger with fond delight on the stories of eloquence, so masterful and stirring because they were a part of his own struggling honest self, and because behind them there was a man, braver, stronger, more beautiful and magnanimous than language could possibly depict. History will point to a career of statesmanship and leadership which has to a remarkable degree stamped itself on the public policy of this entire country.

As a man I feel the grandeur of his career, and yet with the higher intelligence, I realize that it is but the broken wreck of mortality that regards this scene of human glory as satisfactory or final. No career is truly great but that of him who whether he be illustrious or obscure, lives in the future as in the

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

present, and linking himself to the spiritual world, draws from God the life, the rule, the motive and the reward of all his labors. All this was realized by Lincoln at the close of his life, as he meditated calmly, intelligently upon all that he had suffered and enjoyed. It cannot be presumption to make this assertion, since this thought was exemplified in a measure throughout his life, during his sober quiet moments. Who then can doubt that as the shadows lengthened, and he realized that his earthly career was drawing to a close, that he was given an assurance that for him there was no death.

Could our great brother speak to us now I feel confident that he would try to impress upon us in a degree that we could make practical in our lives, that no statesmanship, leadership, governship, is glorious unless it is Christian; that man is true to his duty and his soul only when the life that he leads in the flesh is the life of faith in God!

More than forty years ago, Abraham Lincoln deprecated the fact that he was not identified with any religious sect, and gave expression to the desire that he might finally ally himself with the religion of his "angel mother." How insignificant, however, the rites and creeds of man made institutions become in considering the character and life of our great and elevated leader! The kindness and love that ema-

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

nated from him needed no declaration of man to stamp it with the seal of Christ likeness and purity of service. Such character and love for humanity are only weakened by declarations as to belief. No outside influence could cement this man more closely to his fellow man, nor serve to exemplify more fitly in his life the adherence to the commandments elucidated by Christ. Abraham Lincoln thought of his neighbor before himself, not because of possible reward or punishment, but because his nature was so large and generous that subjective salvation was inferior and insignificant in comparison to the suffering and misery of his fellow men. He gave his all because he could not withhold one jot or title of the service he had pledged to his country and to **all** that suffered as he believed unjustly.

The fame that a man wins for himself is best,—that he can call his own! This was the fame that Lincoln made, and that without selfish ambition or self aggrandizement, as his motive.

I can never forget my own enthusiastic admiration of the boldness and eloquence of Abraham Lincoln during the war, and the impression that he made upon my life and character was in keeping with that of the influence he cast about him on every side. He was great because he was good; only love and compassion emanated from him.

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

True it is that there are deeds that should not pass away, and names that must not wither! It is a historic truth that Fox, Pitt, Phillips, Jefferson, Simpson, Clay, Webster, Sumner, Calhoun and Lincoln died with their harness upon them. It would seem to the finite mind that that of Lincoln especially was strong and highly mounted and fitted for many year's of labor and helpfulness among those for whom he struggled so unselfishly, but of this we cannot speak. Possibly each one performed the mission for which he was sent.

“With more than mortal powers endowed,
How high they soared above the crowd;
Theirs was no common party race,
Jostling by dark intrigue for place!
Like fable gods their mighty war
Shook realms and a nation in its jar;
Beneath each banner proud to stand
Looked up the noblest of the land;
Here let their discords with them die,
Speak not for those a separate doom,
Whom Fate made brothers in the tomb;
But search the land of living men,
Where wilt thou find their like again?

No other president ever lived or ruled this American nation that possessed the art to so identify himself with public measures of the most momentous character, and to maintain at the same time almost

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

universal affection as did Abraham Lincoln. From earliest childhood his desire and duty appeared to lie along the line of national questions, which he handled from the first with familiarity and skill. This, however, did not lessen his ability to sympathize with individual interests, nor lessen his sympathy for each and every representative of this nation. In fact, the broad conceptions he realized served to enrich and beautify his associations with the humblest and most obscure.

I have studied with awe the rise and fall—in death—of Abraham Lincoln. I have admired him and God forgive me—for he was but a man of like passions with us—I fear I have idolized him. He has gone from among men, and it is for us to awake and apply ourselves with renewed energy and increased fidelity to the welfare of our American home that he loved so well and served so truly and so long. Yes, Lincoln has fallen and as the mighty oak falls—in the stillness of the forest, but the richness of his glory will only fade and wither from the earth when the country's history shall have been forgotten. In my admiration for the man and loneliness for his death, I am often led to idly speculate upon his sudden and cruel exit from his experiences of earth: Could we censure the spirits of another world, if in their anxiety and longing for his companionship, they had

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

bribed Atropos to cut the thread while it was yet firm and well defined! Does his soft eloquence enrapture the hosts of Heaven, as it did the masses on earth? Again I am led to fancy the joy and demonstration that awaited him when divested of earthly suffering and equipped with a knowledge of the final goal to be attained by those for whom he had endured all things, he was ushered into the midst of the throngs that preceded him, but who like him had been made perfect by suffering! All idle speculation—we shall not know until the veil has been removed.

Adieu, a last adieu to our beloved Lincoln! All thy countrymen are mournful, even to this day, because of the knowledge that thou art gone. Could we have withheld the hand of that insatiable archer, thou hast not died, but rather thou would'st have tarried among us in the full grandeur of thy loving manhood until we too have no longer need of a country! And yet, we are thankful for the time thou were with us, and for the good wrought by thy powerful individuality. We will cherish thy name while we live as our country's most precious jewel; we will teach our children the lessons of matchless patriotism thou hast taught us, with the hope that augmented by their influence and co-operation, our freedom and moral excellence may only expire with the last of time.

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

In the death of our noble statesman, both hemispheres lost an advocate and friend! He is lamented on the shores of the Hellespont and the banks of the Mississippi and Orinoco. The freedmen of Liberia, learning and practicing the arts of self government in order to civilize and therefore free Africa, have lost a protector—a father, and friend!

America still mourns the departure of a luminary that enlightened and beautified this American continent; the United States a statesman, of deepest wisdom and purest purpose, and the world a man!

“Thy lips have spoken words of deep intent,
With pearls of thought and wisdom glittering o’er,
That timely valor, hope and zeal have blent—
In tokens made illustrious with their lore;

And to the heart of grateful millions sent
Words that thy people love will long enshrine
In memories and pledges most divine.”

In the character of Abraham Lincoln you will find only what is purely and strictly American. His country, its institutions, its policy, interest and destiny and freedom formed the exclusive topic of his public talks, all of which were burning with true patriotism, vehemence of style and logical reasoning. He had no superficial conception of what constituted patriotism, and was not disposed to resort to mean-

ingless expedients to bring about just and equitable economic conditions. With him there was no compromise. He aimed at what he believed to be the truth and did not vary in the least degree, being too noble to be actuated by a spirit of policy or ignoble and slavish motive. While of a logical and analytic turn of mind, he acted according to his conceptions of wise action in the present, believing that in this way he could not go astray. As a public man one of his most distinguished characteristics was his loyalty to truth and honesty and his ability to abide by his own convictions of mind. He deceived no one, nor would he permit his own heart to be deceived by any of those seductive influences that so often warp the judgment and right application of his own intelligence in public life. He never stooped to consider how far any step which he was about to take would lead to his own personal advancement; he never cared whom he might lose or gain by his advocacy of principles in which he believed, nor because of opposition to any particular measure. His consideration of any matter was whether it was right; whether it was in accordance with the Constitution of our country; whether it would redound to the permanent welfare and general interests of our whole commonwealth—the most obscure individual as well as the most prominent. When satisfied upon these points,

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

his purpose was fixed, his determination impregnable.

With him the love of the Union was a passion. It triumphed over all party strife; it subdued the natural fierceness or haughtiness of his temper, and brought him into the most kindly and cordial relations with those who upon all other questions were bitterly opposed to him. Lincoln possessed in an eminent degree the qualities essential to a successful leader. I am authorized to say that he has no equal in any republic, ancient or modern, in so far as he carried out the convictions of his own judgment, and ignored the prejudices of popular feeling. Under the present economic conditions, and perhaps not less at the time of Lincoln's work, it is almost impossible to forget self in the struggle for existence. No matter how ingenious one may be, nor how anxious he may be to further universal ends, in the strain and struggle for an existence, it is almost impossible to eliminate personal desire to amass wealth, or at least to insure comfort for the future as well as the present. So far as we are able to determine, even this spirit was dormant in Abraham Lincoln. His comfort must insure the happiness and well being of his fellow men, else it was not comfort for Abe.

America has given birth to a large number of men who have by their genius, wit and distinguished tal-

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

ents and service impressed their names upon the hearts and memories of their countrymen, but it has produced no other man who in the massive proportions of his character, and in the splendor of his natural endowments can in any way be compared to Abraham Lincoln.

This counselor speaks well for his native home. His statesmanship and oratory combine in their efforts to pay tribute to the name and fame of him who has shed never dying lustre upon the American Home, his native land and the whole civilized world. His name is as dear at the cottage hearth-stone as it is beloved in the halls and palaces of legislation. He swept the chords of the human heart with a master hand of statesmanship and love that swayed men of all sorts and conditions of life.

The success of Abraham Lincoln was distinctively that of an independent self-made man. In spite of the fact that he labored for the right and without self aggrandizement in any degree as his aim, he won for himself a name that will outlast time, and compared with which the reputations of the most ambitious and brilliant sink into insignificance. His success was due to neither accident nor good fortune, nor because of advantages of birth and connections, but on the contrary his career was noticeable for his

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

frugality and the absence of exterior acquisitions, except as he himself acquired. His moderation, candor and love of truth, country and justice, his high respect for law and order, his staunch patriotism and the moral weight of his character were the only weapons with which he had to fight, and with them he steadily advanced from obscurity and poverty to influence and renown. We have no better example of the truth that "Honesty is the best policy," than is exemplified in the life of this great man.

"How sad and strange the fate of this great and good man, the savior of his country, the embodiment of human charity, whose heart, though strong, was as tender as a heart of childhood; who always tempered justice with mercy; who sought to supplant the sword with counsel of reason, to suppress passion by kindness and moderation; who had a sigh for every human grief and a tear for every human woe, should at last perish by the hand of a desperate assassin, against whom no thought of malice had ever entered his loving heart."

This is the sentiment of the nation—it can be nothing else while time lasts, and yet we are unable to pierce beyond the veil or to know whether or not, there was a purpose in his exit from earth.

THE CENTURY TRIBUTE

The patriot by traitors slain,
Who wears the martyr's crown,
An honest man, by loyal worth
He gained world-wide renown.
Long as time lasts, a wreath of fame
Will rest above his shrine.
And saints will worship Lincoln's name,
As one almost divine.

